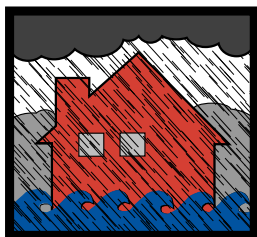


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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Madison County shares lessons learned



In emergency services, nothing is more valuable than good ideas that hold up through the long and arduous

process of disaster recovery. This three-part series will examine how disaster recovery committees in Madison, Russell and Northumberland counties opened the door to a variety of resources.

After last summer's floods, Madison County devised some simple solutions to meet the needs of its citizens.

"We received a lot of media coverage, so people were bringing food, clothing and money to the high school (which served as the shelter)," said Director of Social Services Nan Coppedge. "When the shelter closed, we realized we needed to organize the huge amount of donations we had received."

To solve this problem, the Madison County Flood Relief committee was formed. Representatives from the Madison County Emergency Services Association (or MESA, a local emergency food and shelter program), the Lion's Club, Ruritan Club, the Rapidan Housing Authority, Social Services and the Board of Supervisors composed the committee. This group and MESA handled most of the donations management during the recovery process.

Their mission was defined as follows:

- to provide outreach that would enable local citizens to apply for immediate and long-term assistance;
- to coordinate offers of volunteer labor;
- to establish a fund from the donations received that would provide immediate and long-term assistance to families and

individuals affected by the flooding.

The flood recovery account was set up at a local bank, and three trustees from the committee were appointed to handle the funds.

"We wanted to be able to provide immediate assistance and get money to these families as soon as possible," said Coppedge. "The committee designed a one-page application form — the idea was to keep the form as simple as possible — and applicants were encouraged to spend the money on high-priority items."

Case workers were assigned to applicants to evaluate and verify their need and to provide follow-up. The group met regularly to discuss the applications, exchange information and prevent duplication of efforts.

The committee provided farmers with amounts of between \$1,000-\$5,000 to pay for debris and silt removal. To assist farmers with replacing fences washed away by floodwaters, the group developed a fence voucher program. They made arrangements with a local business that agreed to accept the vouchers and supply the material.

The fund provided money for items such as garage doors, stoves and refrigerators, building supplies, and transportation costs for hauling hay, corn and feed for livestock. A total of \$40,000 went to the fence voucher program, \$11,500 for bridge repair, and cash payments ranging from \$110-\$28,000 went to home repair.

Coppedge's advice to emergency managers? "Secure the support of your local government. Our Board of Supervisors' involvement gave the committee authority and credibility. Think about what you would do if it were to happen to you. Look around the community while

it's still whole and see what kinds of things are important." (Next month: Russell County)

VDES is currently working on a Disaster Annex to supplement local EOPs. This document will provide guidelines regarding the formation of disaster recovery committees. "We'll be using lessons learned with regard to Madison, Russell and Northumberland Counties," said VDES Planner and Disaster Annex Project Coordinator, Barbara Moore-Scruggs.

"The beauty of a recovery committee is that any locality can form one, even if its resources are limited," said Moore-Scruggs.

She described some features that will be included in the annex. It will contain criteria for appointing a chairperson and guidelines that will help determine the local, state, federal, volunteer and private organizations that should be represented on the committee. Part of the plan will include ways to effectively use the expertise of committee members in areas such as hazard mitigation and individual needs assessment.

"These committees will bring to the table the resources of state, private and volunteer organizations during the recovery process and coordinate their efforts as a group," said Moore-Scruggs.

For more information about the Disaster Recovery Annex, call Barbara Moore-Scruggs at 804/674-2441.

IFLOWS system customized to fit needs

Emergency services worker creates solution

One strategy for handling the overwhelming amount of information related to emergency services is to break it down into manageable bits, a method that Capt. Ray Bristow used quite successfully with regard to the IFLOWS system.

Bristow, who works for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in the city of Salem, challenged himself to find a better way to use IFLOWS when it was installed in the county a few years ago.

Initially, his computer displayed one map showing locations of the 23 rain and stream gauges in the region.

"Even though we had the system, I couldn't get any clear picture from it except that we were receiving rain," he described.

Bristow purchased an inexpensive receiver from a local store, a computer system from a pawnshop and set up a receive site at his home. This enabled him to get radio signal data from the rain and stream gauges to use with the IFLOWS program on his home computer.

With information from the National Weather Service (NWS) in Blacksburg and a good topographical map, he divided the IFLOWS area into

zones. Describing these zones as "subbasins within the overall Roanoke River Basin," Bristow identified three "subbasins;" two formed at the north and south forks of the Roanoke River and one formed where the forks merged.

By relating the readings from the gauges to their locations around the subbasins and tying that in with NWS precipitation data, Bristow could make sense from the information. Within these clearly identifiable zones, he got an accurate picture of the chances of flooding or flash flooding occurring in specific areas.

"What does that mean? It means that in areas we know are prone to problems, we can call in extra people and resources," he said. "We can be proactive in warning our citizens and businesses."

Bristow emphasized that IFLOWS was only one part of the overall system. Equally important are Doppler radar information and field reports. "These three systems not only back each other up but, between them, data can be validated as well," he said.

For more information, call Ray Bristow at 540/375-3080.



Crouch study proposes emergency fund

It ripped roofs off of buildings like they were pop-top lids, plowed through blocks of historic structures and pulled up trees as if they were blades of grass. The tornado that swept through the Petersburg/Colonial Heights area in August of 1993 received a presidential declaration as the impact of that disaster became evident in the days that followed.

As an emergency manager, perhaps you'd feel confident that some kind of federal or state funding was forthcoming to aid with recovery. Unfortunately, this is not always guaranteed. The presidential declaration for the Petersburg tornadoes was for Individual Assistance only.

This assistance takes care of many of the needs of your citizens, but does not help your local government which foots the bill for debris removal, restoration of services, repair to government buildings and other costs. Petersburg's local

government eventually did get funds to assist with recovery costs which were provided from the legislature and through a state contingency fund.

House Joint Resolution 72, sponsored by Delegate Joyce Crouch, proposed conducting a study on the feasibility of establishing a Virginia Emergency Relief Fund. The fund's purpose would be to provide state assistance to localities declared disaster areas by the Governor but not approved for federal financial assistance. A draft of the study, based in part on interviews with emergency managers, has recently been completed by the Department of Planning and Budget and VDES.

"There are not many states that have established such a fund," said Addison E. Slayton, Jr., VDES agency coordinator. "It can be expensive. There is some concern on the part of the states that, if they have their own disaster fund, FEMA might not declare disasters they would have otherwise declared. The states' worry is that

this would result in a loss of federal funds. I doubt that this is a valid concern." The study addresses this issue and many others.

"There's a benefit all around for both state and local government," said Slayton. "In past disasters where there was no federal assistance, state assistance to local government was sometimes available on an ad-hoc or case-by-case basis. Local government never knew whether or not they would get any money. This fund will establish rules and guidelines for programs where the state can participate with local government in disaster expenses."

Slayton continued, "I would encourage local emergency managers to follow closely any action regarding the study during the 1997 General Assembly Session and, if there are any hearings, to attend them. It's a well-done study based on a lot of feedback from local government."

For information or to comment on the study, call Ann Wescott, Department of Planning and Budget, at 804/786-1657, or e-mail anne.wescott@lms.state.va.us



HAZ MAT



Container removal presents ongoing challenges

Flotsam and jetsam washed out by floodwaters can include drums, containers and other hazardous waste. The January floods this past year presented a particular challenge for the VDES Technological Hazards Division. Aerial surveillance after that event detected about 433 containers that needed to be retrieved and disposed of.

"State and local government do not have the physical resources for a job this size," said Willie Howlett, VDES hazardous materials field manager. "In this case, because the disaster was presidentially declared, we were able to contract with a private vendor to complete the job." Regional hazmat officers Bernie LeSueur, Tommy Crozier and Bobby Clark were assigned as VDES project managers to oversee the contractor's work.

In what turned out to be one of the largest projects the division has handled, the contractor ended up retrieving a total of 1,312 containers. These were spread out over a large geographical area that included much of the northern, central and western regions of the state.

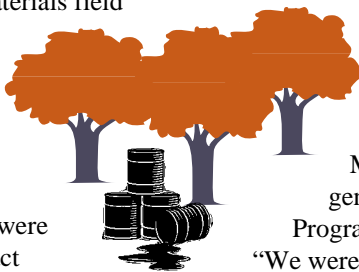
Over the seven months needed to complete the job, container recovery teams battled weather obstacles such as heavy rains that washed out more drums, thick ice covering rivers and lakes, snow, sleet and bitter cold.

"Gaining access to some of the more remote areas was a challenge," said Howlett. Before entering particular sites, workers donned snake chaps to protect against unfriendly reptiles.

"The challenges presented by this project highlighted the significance of the VDES Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Program," said Howlett.

"We were able to provide highly-trained, on-site project managers to ensure the contractor proceeded according to regulations and that public health and safety were protected."

He concluded, "The magnitude of this recovery project highlights the need to take a greater look at mitigation activities with regard to hazardous materials. Some of these activities would include working with local planners, local building and fire inspectors and encouraging public education."



Hurricane Fran sets weather records

The destructive winds and torrential rains that accompanied Hurricane Fran's arrival in Virginia has so far caused over \$338 million in damage with estimates still rising as reports flow in from affected localities. Although Fran had been downgraded to a tropical storm by the time it poised itself at the Virginia-North Carolina border, it still packed powerful, sustained winds of roughly 60 mph.

Fran arrived Friday, September 6, roared through south and central Virginia and exited along the east side of the Blue Ridge mountain range. As it ripped through the state, it established some new weather records.

The following statistics are provided by the National Weather Service, courtesy of Bill Sammler in Wakefield, Melody Hall in Sterling and Mike Emlaw in Blacksburg.

From Wakefield:

☞ In Essex County, tidal surges were 5 1/2 feet above normal, the highest since Hurricane Hazel hit in 1954.

☞ A 71 mph wind gust was recorded in Hampton and a 63 mph gust was recorded at the Norfolk Naval Air Station in the early morning hours on Friday.

From Blacksburg:

☞ Danville had recorded wind gusts of up to 63 mph in the wee morning hours on Friday.

☞ Providence Church in Franklin County and parts of Henry County received about 16 inches of rain from two different events. The area received about 8 inches on Tuesday during one event and over 8 1/2 inches between Thursday and Friday as Fran

passed through, further drenching already saturated ground.

☞ Near South Boston, the Dan River came close to breaking the record established in 1972 during Hurricane Agnes

when it crested at 33.37 feet. During Fran, it missed that mark by less than 2/10ths of a foot when it crested at 33.2 feet.

From Sterling:

☞ Some record river crests occurred along the north and south forks of the Shenandoah River. In Rockingham, at Cootes Store, the river crested at 28 feet. That beat the old record, established in 1942, by about 3 feet. At Strasburg, in Shenandoah County, the river crested at 32.3 feet, beating the 1942 record by 1.1 feet.

☞ According to IFLOWS data, the Big Meadows area in Page County received 12 inches of rain in a 12-hour period.



TRAINING



Disaster Recovery Operations
October 29-31
Manassas

EOC Management and Operations
November 5-7
James City County

Coordinator's Briefing
November 20-21
Chester

For information, call the VDES
Training Office at 804/674-2458

Technological Hazards Division

Hazardous Materials Technician
October 28-November 8
Martinsville

For information, call the VDES Tech
Haz Division at 804/674-2510

Search and Rescue

GSAR Institute, Parts I and II
October 25-27
November 8-10
Smyth County

SAR Council
November 2
Richmond

For information, call Winnie
Pennington at 804/674-2422

Conferences

VEMA Annual Conference
March 5-7
Virginia Beach
For information, call 540/582-7095

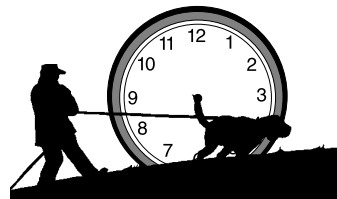
SAR packet available from VDES

Although the Rolling Stones might have had time on their side, it often becomes a cruel adversary to those involved in a search and rescue incident.

One way to ensure the successful outcome of a search is to effectively manage and coordinate resources. To assist with this process, VDES has developed a search and rescue information packet for law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency services coordinators and other groups.

The packet contains a copy of the VDES Search and Rescue (SAR) Resource Guide

and a calendar of SAR training opportunities. In addition, it provides information on the SAR system, checklists, alerting procedures and an



overview of the VDES search and rescue program that delineates local, state and federal responsibilities during a SAR incident.

"The packet is a good planning guide," said VDES

Search and Rescue Coordinator, Winnie Pennington. "The information explains how to most effectively use SAR resources. During a search and rescue incident, it's easy to overlook details because of the stress involved during response. This packet provides guidelines that can help with the organization of search operations."

To order copies of the packet, to receive more information on the VDES SAR program or to arrange for SAR training in your jurisdiction, call Winnie Pennington at: 804/674-2422.

Internet sites of interest

In-depth, detailed flood recovery information is available from the Virginia Cooperative Extension's home page. The site, called "After a Disaster Series of Publications," contains a broad range of valuable recovery material.

Topics featured are: Insurance and Contracts, Landscape and Agriculture, Food and Water, Roof Repairs, Safety, Coping with Stress and Cleaning. Within these

categories, lists of publications containing detailed information on these subjects are offered. As well as tapping into this resource yourself, you may want to inform your local media of the site. As your citizens recover from the effects of Hurricane Fran, the media may want to offer them detailed recovery information using this site as a resource. Key in: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/disaster/disaster.html>

From the Editor's desk

Last month's issue included an *Update* readership survey. The *Update* editors would like to thank those who have sent in their responses.

If you have not yet completed your survey, we want to encourage you to take about five minutes to do this and send it in. Your feedback is valuable to us.



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